

REVIEWS

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COMAS-VIA, Mireia, 2015; *Entre la solitud i la llibertat. Viudes barcelonines a finals de l'Edat Mitjana*, Roma, (IRCVM Medieval Cultures, 4) Viella.

The title of this book perfectly reflects the situation of widowed women in Barcelona at the end of the Middle Ages; a situation that was indeed similar to that experienced by other women in the Catalan Counties and in the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. Despite the presence of their daughters and sons and other elderly family members, they were alone, for once the man, the head of the household, was gone, society saw them in these terms—as it still largely does. The author of the book clearly states in her text that this purported loneliness was filled with sons and daughters, grandfathers and grandmothers, while pointing out that the lack of a head of the family, a man, left women 'alone', that is, unprotected. At the same time, however, as the present book shows, such loneliness made it possible for them to manage their own lives and organize their family and daily life as they saw fit, thus enjoying greater freedom than the one they had when their husbands were still alive. The author defends this premise, on which she bases her work, assessing and analysing in depth the life of these widows, who were not subject to marital control and could organize their everyday reality and decide on matters of importance for them and their children, taking into account only what they thought necessary and beneficial to the family.

Widows shared a common trait: they were women who made their own decisions about the family, both among the upper classes and—possibly to a greater extent—among the lower social groups. These women were responsible for the family and its welfare, and furthermore, among the lower social classes they had to provide for the family's economic well-being. This social reality of widows becomes evident in legal and economic documentation, but also in the literary sources that Mireia Comas-Via uses in some cases. The documentary basis of the book is therefore rigorous and scientifically sound and demonstrates the legal capacity of women to intervene in the management of family wealth. Without a doubt, this situation, which became necessary in the face of widowhood, was tolerated by the patriarchy precisely because it was essential for the well-being of the family, to the point that, as the author notes, it was even preferred to an eventual second marriage.

The documentary sources are abundant and Mireia Comas-Via has treated and used them in a rigorous and intelligent way, relying on them to explore the life, actions, and social reality of widows, especially for women from the lower social classes of Barcelona at the end of the Middle Ages. This provides a detailed picture of how underprivileged women faced widowhood. In the case of the analysed social group, the artisanal class, the Barcelonan society of the time encouraged widows to look after their children and maintain the family business themselves, for

a second husband could disrupt family relations. The thesis defended by the author demonstrates their ability to manage the family business and care for their relatives. This view is based on a rigorous and exhaustive study of the documentation, which questions and even denies the totally negative patriarchal view of women that portrayed widows as intriguing, lustful, and perfidious. In contrast, we find the figure of the exemplary widow, Christine de Pizan, a model that most widows reproduced even without knowing this author, devoted to their children and to maintain the family business until the eldest son could take care of it.

The social reality of married women when their husbands died was very different from that of men who lost their wives. Whereas men quickly entered into a new marriage, for women it was considered better to remain as widows, looking after their sons and daughters, and taking over the family business until the eldest son could do it himself. Mireia Comas rightly notes the different social realities of men and women when faced with the death of their partner, and her interest focuses on widows. Most of them did not remarry, except when a brother of their first husband was available, for the family of the deceased intervened and watched over the widow's actions and the situation of her fatherless children. However, the author argues that widowhood was not a space of freedom for women either, because although the guardianship and continuous intervention of their husband was over, his family considered itself entitled to intervene in any matter related to her and the orphans.

In a society where mortality was high, widows were an important group. While widowers remarried soon, women used to hold on to widowhood for the sake of their offspring, to show their respect for the deceased—as required by the social conventions of the time—and, possibly, as Comas also notes, to maintain a certain amount of freedom to organize their family and their life as they saw fit. The thesis defended by Mireia Comas shows the work capability of women, their trading skills—which society refused to acknowledge—and their desire to live without male guardianship. All of this is perfectly documented and analysed in the present book, and showcases an affirmation of the laboriousness and ability of women to face not only domestic chores, as the patriarchal system required, but also work in the public sphere, such as the management of a workshop.

CRISTINA SEGURA GRAIÑO

ELS CATALANS, 2015. *Els catalans a la Mediterrània medieval: noves fonts, recerques i perspectives*, Ll. Cifuentes, R. Salicrú, M. M. Viladrich (eds.), Roma, (IRCVN-Medieval Cultures, 3), Viella

Els catalans a la Mediterrània medieval is a collective volume edited by Lluís Cifuentes, Roser Salicrú, and M. Mercè Viladrich, and born from the international conference “Catalan Presence in the Meeting Space of the Medieval Mediterranean” that was held in 2009 at the initiative of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed).

This is essentially an interdisciplinary work that results from the collaboration of experts in fields as diverse as history, paleography, archaeology, literature and language studies, art, archival science, the Islamic and Jewish worlds, history of science and medicine, economics and religions. It stands out for its desire to provide a starting point for a critical reflection on the Catalan presence in the Mediterranean, avoiding and overcoming the ‘national’ idealization traditionally adopted by historiography. Thus, the present book appears as a global discussion that aims to renew the field, and boasts a critical spirit that combats the stigmatization of the subject following the assimilation of the Catalan past within ‘national’ parameters.

This purpose is accomplished by including not only contributions by Catalan researchers, but also the work of authors from all over the Mediterranean and beyond. Many of the studies presented here are authored by young researchers who found in this volume an ideal space to present the results of their research. In addition, along with the participation of some consolidated figures in the field of the Catalan presence in the medieval Mediterranean, there is also room for authors who, in spite of regularly working on this subject, do not usually have the opportunity to participate in the traditional conferences dealing with the central theme of this collective work. All this makes it possible to overcome the traditional typecasting affecting the analysis of Catalan presence in the Mediterranean world—based on political, military and mercantile expansion—and to provide a much broader view of the cultural, social and economic interactions involved. The book is divided into three main thematic blocks: (1) *Catalan language, culture, and art in the medieval Mediterranean*; (2) *Presence and integration of Catalan communities in the Mediterranean*; and (3) *Interrelation and dialogue with Muslims and Jews*.

The first section, which analyses Catalan language, culture and art in the Medieval Mediterranean, follows three main research lines. First of all, Catalan culture and the influence that other cultures had on it across the Mediterranean, especially through literature. Thus whereas Miriam Cabré studies the influence of Sicilian culture on Catalan culture at the time of King Pere ‘the Great’, Marco Pedretti analyses the biography of a Mallorcan renegade, Anselm Turmeda, while Xavier Renedo focuses his attention on the trip to the Holy Land in 1323. The second research line deals with the importance and development of Catalan science and technology. Here we find Thomas

M. Capuano's study on agronomic science through medieval Catalan treatises; Lluís Cifuentes, who presents an ambitious digital corpus of science and technology written in Catalan during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, called *Sciència. cat*; and the work of Ramon J. Pujades on medieval Catalan cartography. Finally, this section also discusses Catalan art and the diffusion of Catalan architectural models throughout the Mediterranean, including Matilde Miquel's study on the journey of artists and works of art through the western Mediterranean in the fifteenth century, and Marco Rosario's chapter on the spread of Catalan models in Mediterranean architecture in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Following the Catalan trail, the second section analyses the presence and integration of Catalan communities across the Mediterranean through commercial relations. Thus, the reader is guided through a complete tour around the main economic centres of the period, starting in the Canary Islands (Juan Manuel Bello) and through Eastern Sicily (Gemma Teresa Colesanti) towards the Eastern Mediterranean (Damien Coulon), and Malta (Charles Dalli). Nikolas Jaspert proposes a shift to the north with his study devoted to the Roman Empire, but, as it could not have been otherwise, the attention quickly returns to the *Mare Nostrum*, specifically to Italy. There, Luciano Palermo and Manuel Vaquero introduce the relations of Catalan merchants and bankers with Rome, Giovanna Petti Balbi brings the audience closer to Genoa at the end of the Middle Ages, and Maria Elisa Soldani does the same with Pisa and Siena.

The final result is a panoramic and rigorous overview of Catalan relations with the European and Mediterranean Christian world. However, it is necessary to remember that the Mediterranean was and still remains a cross-cultural area. That is why the contact of the Christian world with the Muslim and Jewish worlds cannot be neglected, and, as the third section evinces, this constant cultural exchange also involved Catalans.

This section is not articulated through conflict or opposition, but from a constructive point of view based on interaction and dialogue. Combining general studies that invite readers to delve into the world of contacts proposed in these chapters with specific analyses of the situation in relation to the Catalan context, the volume manages to convey the image of a Mediterranean in constant connection.

On the one hand, Linda G. Jones, David Nirenberg, Jonathan Ray, Guillem Rosselló, and Maya Shatzmiller present the general context by discussing political-military alliances between Christians and Muslims; the use of the idea of the exemplarity of the period by historiography; the presence of Jews in the Iberian kingdoms; power and culture in the Islamic Balearic Islands; and the study of numismatics and Islamic markets. On the other hand, Carmel Ferragud, Roser Salicrú, and Nadia Zeldes materialize this overall perspective through the study of Saracen and Christian farriers in Valencia; the analysis of the contacts between the Crown of Aragon and

Islam through merchants, diplomats, and translators; and the approach to the Catalan Jews and converts in Sicily, respectively.

This work indeed represents the culmination of a long research process based on the renewal of stagnant concepts that have been traditionally presented in a classical and profoundly stereotyped manner. It therefore responds to a desire for conceptual openness based on interdisciplinarity that breaks with the traditional mental framework established by historiography, which has turned the issue of Catalan presence in the Mediterranean into a thorny and deeply partisan topic. This work, therefore, has all the necessary elements to become the starting point for the renewal of the field.

NICOLAU LÓPEZ ESPINASA

CALDERÓN ORTEGA, José Manuel y DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, Francisco Javier, 2015, *El proceso de redacción del último testamento de Fernando el Católico el 22 de enero de 1516*. Zaragoza, Institución Fernando el Católico.

Historiography has recently focused on studying very diverse and sometimes very specific aspects of the figure of King Fernando II, known as the Catholic. J. M. Calderón and F. J. Díaz, both doctors and professors of History of Law at the University of Alcalá, published the present work coinciding with the fifth centenary of the king's death. The aim of this edition is to analyse the king's last two testaments (the one written in Aranda del Duero, and the one he drew up in Madrigalejo the day before his death). So far, many of the issues that appear in the will have been overlooked, and thus this work makes a notable contribution to filling this gap through a thorough analysis of the documents. The book is based on a threefold objective. First, it intends to situate readers within the context of what was happening in the kingdom at that time in order to allow them to understand the undergoing changes. This is the purpose of the first three chapters of the volume: *El postreo de la vida de un rey*, *El testamento de Madrigalejo*, and *La Muerte del rey*. Secondly, the authors address the factors that came together for the king to change his will just a few hours before he died; and finally, and as a third objective, they enclose a rich documentary appendix and aim to help readers to visually understand the differences between the last two wills.

The authors pay special attention to the king's situation a few months before issuing the last testament, given that, according to chroniclers, he was in rather poor health after his second marriage to Germana de Foix. Next, they focus on discussing the will given in Aranda de Duero on 26 April, noting that he made another will in Burgos in May 1512. Both are similar but the

most notable differences are that in Aranda del Duero the rulership of both crowns fell into the hands of his grandson Carlos due to Queen Juana's incapacity. However, since Carlos was far away, it would be his other grandson, Fernando, who would rule as governor on Carlos's behalf. This second will was not notarized and therefore had no legal validity, but it served as a template for the one written in Madrigalejo months later. Let us recall that Zurita already studied this testament, but came to some erroneous conclusions (pp. 7).

In May 1515, the monarch went to Burgos, where the *Cortes* were to be held. He then travelled through various territories of the Crown to settle pending cases (pp. 8-9). His health was getting weaker but that did not prevent him from heading south. He spent Christmas in Plasencia together with the great court that had accompanied him, and from there, passing through different towns and villages, he made his way to Madrigalejo. His health was very delicate by then and it is here that the authors of this work delve into what happened. Fernando II was confessed and then made a new testament, but before that, it is known that he sought the advice of his most trusted lawyers. The monarch put forward a series of doubts and possible conflicts that could arise after his death. That is why he decided not to allow his grandson Fernando to rule while his brother Carlos was out of the territory. His bastard son Alonso would be the governor of Aragon and Cardinal Cisneros would be the governor of Castile. The authors make a great effort to point out the conclusion that the king only wanted his advisors to confirm what he had long since decided. They worked on the original document and ratified and added clauses that were revised and confirmed before Miguel Velázquez Climente notarized and legalized the text; as required by Spanish law, seven witnesses and two notaries and executors were present while it was being written.

In short, these pages analyse the political circumstances that brought about a major change in both power and legal affairs. Thus, in the will of Aranda del Duero the government of the Kingdoms of Aragon and Castile fell to his grandson Fernando, due both to the incapacity of Queen Juana and to the fact that his brother Carlos had not yet arrived from Ghent. In contrast, in the testament of Madrigalejo, Fernando and Juana were left in the background and Cardinal Cisneros and Alonso, archbishop of Zaragoza, were appointed to rule. The king left Tarento and the cities of Naples, among other territories, to his grandson Fernando. The day after drawing up this testament, the king died and the testament was publicly read.

Due to its form, clarity, scholarship and innovation, this edition constitutes a remarkable contribution to the understanding of the last hours of the life of King Fernando II. The authors have based their research on a rich corpus of primary sources that perfectly reflect the monarch's concerns. The depth of this study can be seen in the comments of both researchers, which improve and complement previous studies. In addition to the extensive documentary appendix, the work includes more than fifty notes that serve as bibliographic explanations to better understand the body of the text. There we find the comparison between both testaments which is a perfect example

of an impeccable work. The contributions of Calderón and Díaz complete and complement the questions that have hitherto remained unresolved, and allow us to understand in a coherent manner why there was such a sudden change only a few hours before the monarch's demise.

ELISA BONDIA SUÑÉ

BADIA, Lola; CIFUENTES, Lluís; MARTÍ, Sadurní; PUJOL, Josep (eds.), 2016. *Els manuscrits, el saber i les lletres a la Corona d'Aragó, 1250-1500*. Barcelona, Publicacions de l'abadia de Montserrat.

The starting point of this volume was the homonymous workshop held on 24 October 2014 at the University of Barcelona. The workshop was organized by the editors of this work, and brought together several scholars with important contributions that dealt with different topics connected through the study of manuscripts, their materiality and their production, circulation, and reception contexts. In these pages, the authors present their research on topics as diverse as the *Conte d'amor*, verse compositions, sentimental fiction, technical medical literature, and the transmission of Petrarch and Dante's works. The publication includes all the papers presented at the workshop, with a chapter devoted to each of them.

In the first chapter, Míriam Cabré and M. Victòria Rodríguez Winiarski discuss the *Conte d'amor* and the evolution of verse narrative in the Catalan context, as well as its means of production and circulation. The authors propose a continuity between the Occitan and Catalan narrative traditions in verse, and present the example of the *Conte d'amor* as part of a tradition with many points in common with Occitan verse narrative. Therefore, they defend the need to avoid reading the *Conte d'amor* as an anachronism and instead suggest to interpret it fully embedded in the Catalan narrative tradition.

The second chapter, authored by Marta Marfany Simó, analyses a consolatory poem written in 1348 on a flyleaf of the court records of the *sotsvegueria* of Ripoll, currently kept in the Archive of the Crown of Aragon. The autograph poem is preserved as a draft, thus reflecting numerous corrections and modifications that, according to Marfany, prove extremely valuable to understand how poems were composed. The essay offers a complete transcription of the text, with different annotations and corrections by the author.

The third contribution, by Gemma Pellissa Prades, focuses on the manuscript transmission of Catalan sentimental fiction. The author analyses the means and mediators through which the

most important works of Catalan sentimental fiction spread, mostly through chansonniers. The importance of Pere Torroella and Hug de Rocabertí is also highlighted by means of a methodology based on the interpersonal relationships between the authors of sentimental fiction.

The following essay is the first of a pair of studies devoted to technical literature and scientific writings. Montserrat Cabré i Pairet proposes a review of the Latin medical texts written by Trota of Salerno that were re-written and disseminated in Catalan among the medical community of Catalonia. The name “Trotula” was used to refer to the author herself, to the Catalan translation of the *De curis mulierum*, to compendiums of medical literature, and to other related works. This is an interesting case of tradition and transmission of a figure associated with female medical practice.

The second work in this series, written by Lluís Cifuentes i Comamala, closes the section related to scientific, technical and medical literature, proposing an overview of medieval and Renaissance medical handbooks. The author offers an interpretation of the genre that is far removed from the idea of a closed work, even changing authors and allowing for modifications over time. In addition, Cifuentes suggests understanding such handbooks as a vernacular genre, taking into account the importance of Romance languages, which, sometimes in coexistence with Latin, characterize these works.

The study by Francisco J. Gómez deals with the works of Dante and their diffusion in late medieval Catalonia. His research focuses on five extant medieval mentions and references to the *Commedia*: by King Martí I, called ‘the Humane’; Dantean manuscripts in the entourage of Bernat d’Esplugues, a notary and scribe of Barcelona’s City Council; a Dantean manuscript owned by Joan Pasqual; the Dantean works used by Joan de Pisa for teaching; and finally the glossaries of the Purgatory written by Bernat Nicolau. By means of these references, Francisco J. Gómez shows the exegetical utilities that Dantean works acquired from the beginning of the fifteenth century onwards.

In turn, Romana Brovia analyses the situation of the manuscripts containing Petrarch’s works during the fifteenth century by providing an overview of the subject and suggesting several important issues for further research.

The closing chapter of this volume deals with the graphic representations in Ramon Llull’s *Book on the contemplation of God*, analysing their authorship, possible influences and interpretations within the context of the complete Lullian corpus. The authors, Albert Soler and Anthony Bonner, consider the analysis of the graphic apparatus of the *Llibre de contemplació* as a key element both of this work and regarding the whole corpus of Ramon Llull’s writings.

In addition to the contributions of the participants of the workshop, the book includes the abstracts provided by the different speakers, as well as name and works indices.

In short, this is a volume that delves into many different aspects of written culture in the late Middle Ages, offering some of the most up-to-date and innovative research on the subject. Although it may seem that the diversity of topics obscures the main rationale of the book, the fact is that the different chapters come together nicely and contribute to provide a comprehensive overview. This is a volume that fulfils its objective and constitutes a bibliographic reference to be taken into account when considering the latest research in this field.

ORIOL MURALL DEBASA

